**Steps for returning to in-person research activities on campus: College of the Liberal Arts (v. 4.0, November 9, 2020)**

This document includes procedures for requesting access to *shared* *on-campus research facilities* (e.g., labs) and for *individual researchers* wishing to return to campus to use private spaces (e.g., their office). Version 3 contained information on conducting *human subjects research* (section 4). Version 4 revises guidance for involving *students* in research (section 3); while student names must be given to the department Head, they should not be entered in the online Return to Work portal. The steps in the process to reopen labs and other on-campus research facilities use a general return-to-work authorization request form online; because the form is general, information must be entered in specific ways in order for the request to be properly routed.

As of v3.2, and effective August 3, 2020, OPP has certified that all buildings are ready for re-occupancy, and so v 3.2 have dropped the final OPP approval step (step 11 in v 3.1).

1. **Individual Researcher**

If you have an individual researcher who needs to return to research in their individual (private) office, at this time they should submit the Return to Work Authorization request at <https://sites.psu.edu/returntowork/> following the steps listed in the attached “Liberal Arts Return to On-site Work” document.

1. We can cover returning researchers in this process because although it is research, it’s more just a return to an onsite location for any of their work.
2. For an individual returning to their office, under the “Requester Info” tab, an individual faculty member should NOT mark research (if they mark research, the form will flow up to the Vice-President for Research, which is unnecessary in this case). Instead, if they want to do individual research work while in their private office (which is not a shared facility), they should mark “Other” and enter the activities they are doing in the box, which would include a combination of research, teaching, and other activities.
3. **Shared Facility**
4. **Notify Departments (Associate Dean):** Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies will contact department Heads and Center Directors (this email).
5. **Notify PIs/Lab Directors (Department Head/Director):** Heads and Directors will notify PIs/researchers with labs or needing access to other on-campus facilities that they control about the considerations and requirements for reopening research facilities, as provided in the accompanying documents.
6. **Consult with Department Head (PI/Lab Director):** PIs/research leaders should consult with their department Head concerning any in-person research facility/lab that they wish to restart. This discussion with the Head will include discussion of any needed coordination with other facilities in the same building in terms of personnel transition and inter-lab contact. If the work will involve human subjects, that should be a specific point of discussion. The Head may request that PIs coordinate with PIs of other facilities to minimize cross-traffic, for example, by requiring use of a scheduling or sign-in system. If this is occurring, such coordination should be entered by the PI in the online forms. In addition to other materials, the Head should be given a list of personnel *including students* who will be accessing the facility.
7. **Complete the Return to On-Site Work Authorization form online (PI/Lab Director) at**

<https://sites.psu.edu/returntowork/>.

* 1. On the “Requester Info” tab of the form, be sure to check “Research” as the work category.
  2. On the “Routing/Approvals” tab, under “Does the form need to be reviewed or edited by another person prior to sending for approvals, mark “Yes” and then enter Scott Bennett’s email ([dsb10@psu.edu](mailto:dsb10@psu.edu)). This will ensure appropriate routing to the Associate Dean; from there it will flow to the department Head and Dean. (There is another Scott Bennett in the dropdown, so please be sure to select dsb10!)
  3. This form will ask for information about
     1. PI Name
     2. PI Contact information (email, phone)
     3. Department
     4. Room number/identification
     5. Brief description of the work and why it must be done on-site and not remotely.
     6. List of faculty and postdocs who need to access the space, and Penn State User ID. *As of version 4.0, this section should NOT include the specific names of any students.*
     7. Access details: How often space must be accessed, for how long, by how many people at a time
     8. Health/safety measures:
        1. PIs and Heads should review and specify how their return plan will address the items listed under “Phase 2” in the attached “Return to Research” document and EHS ***“***[Laboratory and Research Ramp-up Planning Guide](https://ehs.psu.edu/sites/ehs/files/ehs-rru-checklist.pdf).”If it is easier to complete that checklist as a separate document, please feel free to do so and attach a scanned version. The Materials Research Institute “[MRI Guidelines for Covid-19 Return to Research Procedures](https://pennstateoffice365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/MRILabs/EZtF3fSjhzVCruADTnSa-JMBWbwBswLvcLK6_W-8kTG4wQ?e=yEoeIQ)” is a detailed return plan with health and safety protocols that may also be used as a helpful reference.
        2. This plan should therefore include items such as 1) individual safety precautions (e.g. PPE), 2) equipment cleaning routines, 3) social distancing measures and reduced occupancy (ensuring 6’ between users, and restricting occupancy to (say) 50% capacity), 4) scheduling to minimize simultaneous access to both the building and to the specific room. Although the plan should not list the specific students involved in research, safety protocols must cover students who will be accessing the facility.
        3. If the department is listing multiple facilities in a department building, please provide a plan for coordination/safety between the multiple facilities (e.g., how will you minimize cross-contact and uncoordinated traffic?)
        4. Verify that PI/facility lead has all contact information for all personnel
     9. Plan for quickly reducing work again if necessary
     10. Target/requested data for reopening

1. **Review and Complete the EHS Research Ramp-up Checklist (PI/Lab Director) at** <https://ehs.psu.edu/sites/ehs/files/ehs-rru-checklist.pdf>. For many labs on many items, the answer will be “N/A.”
2. **Submit EHS Checklist** to Department Head and to Susan Johnson, [saj12@psu.edu](mailto:saj12@psu.edu).
3. **Information Review / Approvals (Associate Dean):** The Associate Dean for Research and Graduate studies will receive an email requesting approval.Facility requests will be reviewed by the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, the College’s facilities manager (Chris Hort) in consultation with the Dean’s Office, and Liberal Arts faculty who have served on the University return to research committee. Particular attention will be given to the included lab health and safety protocols.
   1. Approval may be given as is, approved subject to specific revisions, or returned to the PI for revisions.
   2. Required revisions by researchers may include direction to provide cautionary signage; revisions to schedules; defining paths in and out of buildings; provision of or ensuring that masks will be in use; or requirements for notification to and consultation with those personnel who will be accessing facilities.
   3. The Associate Dean will approve the request in the online system when all necessary protocols are met. This will forward the request to the Head.
4. **Information Review / Approvals (Department Head):** The Head will receive an email requesting approval.
   1. The Head’s approval should include consideration of other labs in department’s buildings; in particular, health and safety measures should take into account schedules for other labs.
   2. The Head will approve the request in the online system when all necessary protocols are met. This will forward the request to the Dean.
5. **Information Review / Approvals (Associate Dean/College):** The Dean of the College will receive an email requesting approval.
6. **Vice President Approval (OVPR):** After College approval, the request online will move through the system to the Senior Vice President for Research.
7. **Final Notification (College):** After final approvals are received, we will notify the Head and relevant researcher/PI that the facility is ready to be used.
8. **Students Involved in Research in Shared Facilities**

**Graduate students**: Graduate students are allowed as researchers in shared research facilities incorporated into appropriate safety protocols. As of November 2020, individual student names should not be listed in the online Return to Work portal, although they should be listed in materials submitted to the department Head.

**Undergraduates**: We now have permission allow undergraduates to return to shared research spaces, with appropriate safety protocols.  If you need or expect to have undergraduates working in your shared facilities:

1. If you are submitting a new request for lab/facility opening per these policies, then simply include a discussion of undergraduates in your return-to-onsite work request.  As of November 2020, individual student names should not be listed in the online Return to Work portal, although they should be listed in materials submitted to the department Head.
2. If you already submitted a request for faculty and grad student users of a shared research space, please modify the internal spreadsheet you developed before and send the revised version to Susan Johnson (only the spreadsheet; at this time you do not need to modify what you submitted online).
3. Requests for undergraduates working in shared research spaces should be minimized, with requests made only when necessary.
4. Key guidance from Lora Weiss, Senior Vice President for Research, is as follows:

* Given the limited capacity within our facilities, the need to maintain physical distancing, and the updates we’ve included in our lab standard operating procedures (SOP), please recognize that not all students will be able to have an on-campus research experience. If you plan to have undergraduates return to your on-campus facility, please prioritize your resources and capacity for undergraduates or integrated undergraduate/graduate students intending to graduate by Summer 2021 or those for whom this is a required, credit-bearing experience.
* Consistent with prior recommendations, please emphasize remote work as much as possible. If you find that a student needs to engage in lab work, please determine if the student can work into the rotation following your SOP and complying with lab/college safety guidelines for on-campus research. We may find ourselves in a situation that, as conditions change, labs may need to curtail their on-campus work. Therefore, please consider alternative plans for the completion of a student’s thesis, including a systematic review.
* Remember that the health and safety of our students, staff, faculty, and community are of the upmost importance, so please keep this in mind as you consider allowing undergraduate students to conduct on-campus research.
* Regardless of whether or not you are able to accommodate more students, please have conversations with all your students to manage their expectations during this upcoming academic year. Finally, for Summer Session II, we will consider undergraduate on-campus research on a case-by-case basis.

1. **Research involving Human Subjects**

Limited research involving human subjects may now be proposed. The University will approve only a limited number of studies involving human subjects, and only for research conducted on-site at PSU. The process, workflow, and form are available at [Procedures: Request to Conduct In-person Human Subjects Research During COVID-19 Pandemic](https://psu.box.com/v/ProceduresRequestIn-PersonHSR). Please continue to check the [Revised Standards](https://psu.box.com/v/COVIDResearchVisits) and the [IRB website](https://www.research.psu.edu/covid_irb) for additional information.

1. Consult with Department Head: PIs/research leaders should consult with their department Head concerning any in-person research facility/lab that they wish to restart, and the use of human subjects in that facility.
2. Researcher submits [FORM: Request to Conduct In-person Human Subjects Research During COVID-19 Pandemic](https://psu.box.com/v/FORMtoRequestIn-PersonHSR) via [InfoReady](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpsu.infoready4.com%2FCompetitionSpace%2F%23competitionDetail%2F1819081&data=02%7C01%7Cdsb10%40psu.edu%7C4bfaa4150b7a4368987708d824ecd2f1%7C7cf48d453ddb4389a9c1c115526eb52e%7C0%7C0%7C637299946890231097&sdata=qciP9q7a3wY92kzCyp0P%2F865IXSDbhh0v5JUkN56rOA%3D&reserved=0).
3. If the researcher has already completed a Return-to-Work/Return-to-Research Authorization process (above) with HR and Space Re-Occupancy Registration, indicate this on the Human Subjects form under item 5c.
4. If the researcher has not already completed a Return-to-Work/Return-to-Research Authorization process (above) with HR and Space Re-Occupancy Registration, indicate this on the Human Subjects form, and complete the process above to request a reopening of the research facility under item 5c.
5. The Associate Dean will be prompted and review the request in InfoReady. The Associate Dean will consult with the Dean of the College as necessary.
6. If approved, requests will then be forwarded to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research (OSVPR) for approval.
7. Once the Human Subject research approval is confirmed by OSVPR in InfoReady and prior to initiating research, studies must also have any needed approval from the appropriate compliance committees (i.e., IRB, IBC, etc.).
8. **Additional Considerations**
9. Approvals, timing of approvals, and possibilities for delayed approval by the Associate Dean will take into consideration the concerns and priorities in the attached “Considerations by Deans” guidelines.
10. Our understanding (via a Provost email to Dean Lang May 26, 2020) is that any required PPE will be paid for centrally.
11. In the case of the College of Liberal Arts, most of the facilities are in different locations, so we expect that multiple simultaneous approvals will be possible.
12. If there are multiple facilities in one building, we will assess or require coordination across those facilities to minimize possible cross-traffic, for example to require a clear hallway before transiting, or developing a staggered schedule over a week (say).
13. Approval may be withdrawn at any time in response to health and safety issues, or environmental changes (e.g., University or State guidance).